

Moore Tosses Winning Quips At Ring 8

Written by Robert Mladinich
Saturday, 23 February 2008 19:00

The February 19th meeting of the Veteran Boxers Association, Ring 8, in New York, was a grand affair with a host of boxing luminaries in attendance.

The “main event” of the evening saw undefeated junior middleweight James Moore, 14-0 (10 KOs), honored as a “Future Champion.”

Moore, who hails from County Wicklow in Ireland, now fights out of Queens.

A veteran of 340 amateur fights and the former captain of the Irish national amateur team that included John Duddy and Andy Lee, Moore is headlining the pre-St. Patrick’s Day extravaganza that was just renamed “A Fistful of Shamrocks” at Madison Square Garden on Saturday, March 15th.

Accompanied by his lovely wife Leanne, assistant Barney Moore (no relation) and Barney’s wife Denise, Moore ingratiated himself to the scores of Ring 8 members and guests, many of whom are grizzled fighters from a bygone era.

“The more you drink here, the more dramatic these guys’ stories get,” joked Moore, who is as quick with a quip as he is with his trademark thudding left hook to the body.

But, he added, “Like most boxers I’d much rather have an opponent in front of me than a microphone.”

Other special guests included esteemed trainer Emanuel Steward, who in addition to training IBF heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko also works with top middleweight prospect Andy Lee.

Steward reiterated his belief that if Duddy beats Walid Smichet, 17-3-3 (13 KOs), a Tunisian who fights out of Quebec, Canada, on Saturday, February 23, on the undercard of the heavyweight unification bout between Klitschko and WBO titlist Sultan Ibragimov at MSG, he will likely battle universally recognized middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik in June.

Should Duddy beat Pavlik, asserts Steward, a bout between him and Lee could potentially be the most lucrative non-heavyweight title fight in history.

And if that was to occur, he added, “There would be no better number-one contender than Mr. (James) Moore.”

Steward also heaped high praise on the European amateur system, which is responsible for churning out future titlists in similar fashion to the way Steward developed champions from the ground up at Detroit’s fabled Kronk Gym in the 1980s.

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His strong feelings about the need for a solid amateur program was reiterated by Don Turner, who was in town because he trains Duddy, as well as former WBC featherweight champion Juan LaPorte, trainer Tommy Gallagher, and respected cut man "Big" George Mitchell.

"This is the best boxing organization of this kind in the country," said Steward. "Back in the day, New York was the center of everything in boxing. Many of the guys here were like heroes to me. I am honored to be here among all of you."

Prior to the actual meeting, the major item discussed by the executive board was the assistance Ring 8 is rendering to one elderly member who is afflicted with dementia. The organization was instrumental in having a cleaning crew, which was supervised by social workers, remove 150 bags of trash from the ex-fighter's squalid apartment.

In addition, board members agreed to pay the March rent of one former world champion who has recently endured some temporary financial setbacks.

They also discussed the possibility of assisting the Queens Historical Society in erecting a monument on the grounds of a local Wendy's fast-food restaurant.

The eatery is located where the fabled Sunnyside Gardens, a venue where so many members of Ring 8 once thrilled scores of fans, used to stand like a pugilistic shrine.

"The interests of ex-fighters is at the heart of everything we do," said Henry (Hennie) Wallitsch, the colorful president of Ring 8 and a bulldog of a heavyweight whose career spanned from 1957-66 and saw him square off with, among others, Ernie Terrell, Bobby Halpern and the behemoth James J. Beattie (twice).

There is nothing Wallitsch loves more than helping fighters in need, but he proposed that in the future those seeking assistance, monetary or otherwise, should be willing to pony up the \$25 fee for an annual membership.

All too often, he stated, and others reiterated, fighters in need who are not Ring 8 members only come around to pick up a check before going on their way.

"We don't ask for anything in return, but it would be nice if more of the guys we helped said hello once in a while," said Wallitsch. "We want to help, but it is only fair that most of those we help should be members."

His suggestion was supported by the majority of the board.

Anyone wanting to make a tax-deductible donation to Ring 8 can do so by mailing a check to:

Veteran Boxers Association

Ring 8

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